

ORGAN GIANTS

J.S. BACH • MENDELSSOHN • SCHUMANN • BRAHMS • B-A-C-H

William Fox

Sunday 2nd October 2022, 4.30 pm

 St PAUL'S
CATHEDRAL

Complete Organ Works of J. S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Recital XXVII

Prelude and Fugue in E minor

BWV 533

is an early work, emerging soon after Bach completed his apprenticeship with Georg Böhm and obtained his organist post in Arnstadt. Stylistic traits of Buxtehude and Lübeck characterise much of the Prelude, while the Fugue is unusual in having five (rather than four, as was typical for an early fugue) entries. The occasionally dissonant harmony of the Prelude might suggest why Bach did not fare well with the stylistically conservative authorities and congregation of Arnstadt.

Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ

722

Fughetta: Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ

697

Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ

723

BWV 722 is a robust harmonisation of this Lutheran song of praise, interspersed with improvisatory flourishes. BWV 697 uses the first phrase of the chorale melody as a brief and sprightly fugue subject, with a countersubject of semiquaver runs, perhaps signifying the descent of God's Son to earth. BWV 723 presents the hymn as a soprano cantus firmus, singing above a fugue-style accompaniment.

Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier

706

Dating from Bach's Weimar years, this is a serene setting of the chorale 'Dearest Jesus, we are here'. The gently flowing lower voices lend a subdued and reverential character.

Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr'

663

Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr'

711

The chorale *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr'* is the Lutheran paraphrase of the *Gloria in excelsis*. Originating in Weimar but revised later in Leipzig for inclusion in the 'Great Eighteen', BWV 663 sees two upper voices playfully intermingling above a bassline in a trio-like texture, before the introduction of a heavily embellished cantus firmus in the tenor, unusually. BWV 711 is a bicinium – the hymn sounding as a soprano solo above an agile bass line.

Prelude and Fugue in A minor

551

Taking the typical form of the North German praeludia, this free work betrays the influence of Bach's idol Dietrich Buxtehude. Given the



uncharacteristic contrapuntal inconsistencies within it, modern scholarship identifies the work as one of Bach's first attempts at an organ piece. Much like BWV 533, this piece provides a rare glimpse of Bach the student, learning his craft by imitating the example of his masterful elders.

Notes by Samuel Bristow

William Fox

William Fox is currently the Acting Organist and Assistant Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral, having been Sub-Organist since 2018. He works with the world-famous choir of St Paul's, accompanying and directing the music at services, including services of national significance. In June, William played the organ at the National Service of Thanksgiving for the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II, and at the Service of Prayer and Reflection the day following her death, broadcast to millions around the world. William began his musical education as a chorister at York Minster, before holding organ scholarships at Wells and Hereford Cathedrals. Prior to his appointment at St Paul's, he was organ scholar and a prizewinning academic scholar at Magdalen College, Oxford, from where he graduated with a first class degree in Music. William became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists as a teenager, winning the Turpin and Durrant prize.

William's debut recording, of the organ works of Cecilia McDowall was released in 2021, gaining 5 * reviews in *Choir and Organ* and *The Organ*. As a continuo and orchestral organist William has recently appeared with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the City of London Sinfonia, Gabrieli Consort and Players, the Cardinal's Musick, and the London Youth Choirs. Since 2019, William has additionally been a Junior Fellow at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where he also studies. As a piano accompanist, he is the winner of the 2018 Sir Anthony Lewis Memorial Prize Competition.

Next recital

Sunday 16th October, 4.30 pm

John Challenger

Members of the audience are kindly requested to switch off all electronic devices, and are reminded that photography and recording are not permitted.

The musical heritage of St Paul's has come under severe pressure as a result of COVID-19. There will be a collection as you leave the Cathedral today. We recommend a donation of £5, and thank you in advance for your contribution.